

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorney General Files Housing Discrimination Lawsuit

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Dec. 29, 2006) The Attorney General's Office today announced that it filed a lawsuit against Peoria property owner Stanislaw Barbara Ogorsaly and her former real estate agent, June Lamb, for alleged housing discrimination based on race.

The lawsuit follows an investigation by the Civil Rights Division of the Arizona Attorney General's Office that concluded reasonable cause existed to believe that Ogorsaly and Lamb discriminated against an African-American couple who applied to rent a townhouse owned by Ogorsaly. The unit is located next door to Ogorsaly's residence.

The lawsuit alleges that Ogorsaly retained Lamb to rent the Peoria townhouse located at 18650 N. 91st Ave. #601. Lamb listed the townhouse on the Multiple Listing Service. In June 2006, Herman and Velvie Green, an African-American couple from Michigan who were planning to relocate to the Valley, looked at Ogorsaly's rental townhouse with their real estate agent, Brian Bird. The Greens submitted a written application to Lamb, offering to rent the townhouse for the asking amount and providing a \$500 deposit.

According to the lawsuit, when Lamb presented the Greens' rental offer, Ogorsaly asked Lamb if the couple was Black, made derogatory comments about Black people, and stated that she did not want to rent the townhouse to Black people. Ogorsaly declined the Greens' full-price offer, even though she had not received any offers during the six months the listing had been posted. Instead, Ogorsaly sent a counteroffer increasing the monthly rental amount.

According to court documents, when Lamb presented Bird, the Greens' agent, with the counteroffer, she asked him whether his clients were Black. She told Bird she was asking because Ogorsaly did not want to rent to Black people.

The Greens accepted the counteroffer and provided additional information requested by Lamb for the purported purpose of checking their credit. In the end, Ogorsaly declined to rent the townhouse to the couple.

The Attorney General's Office is seeking actual and punitive damages for the Greens, injunctive relief to stop the alleged discriminatory practices, and a statutory civil penalty against the defendants.

The Arizona Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability or national origin. If you believe your civil rights have been violated, please contact the Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Division in Phoenix at 1.877.491.5742. To file a complaint in person, the Attorney General's Office has 25 satellite offices throughout the State with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours of operation are posted on the Attorney General's Web site at www.azag.gov. Consumers can also file complaints online through the Web site.

A copy of the complaint is attached.

###